



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1406 Longworth House Office Building • Washington, D.C. 20515 • (202) 225-5506

Employee Free Choice A Fundamental Right

By U.S. Congressman Ron Kind

Throughout my congressional career I have fought hard on behalf of working families to increase pension and retirement benefits, to protect the right to organize and to improve conditions in the workplace. But I'm concerned that legislative victories of the past are at stake if Congress doesn't act to protect employee free choice and change current labor law to discourage unfair labor practices by employers. As an original cosponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 3619), which amends the National Labor Relations Act to establish a more efficient system for monitoring labor relations, I see an opportunity for Congress to do just that.

Americans have waged countless battles to improve conditions in the workplace and to pave the way for a better life for all working families. Yet today they lack the adequate measures to address workplace inequities and to safeguard against unfair labor practices. The National Labor Relations Act, enacted by Congress in 1935, no longer works to protect the right of workers to form and join unions. But the need to monitor relations between unions and employers is just as important today as it was 70 years ago.

In recent years we have been hearing about how some employers intentionally thwart the organizing efforts of their employees and deny workers' their basic human rights. Just last year I sent a letter to Robert Kohlhepp, CEO of Cintas Corporation, urging Cintas management to negotiate in good faith with its workers to organize a union after hearing reports from workers that Cintas mounted an extensive campaign aimed at dissuading employees from supporting the union through retaliatory firings, harassment, surveillance, and a string of mandatory meetings, videos, and letters.

The Employee Free Choice Act would combat this obstructionist behavior by: 1) guaranteeing free choice through majority recognition; 2) facilitating initial labor agreements through mediation and arbitration; 3) and provide more effective remedies against employer coercion.

Having grown up in a labor household, I know there is no question that union workers benefit from a collective voice, thus improving the lives of all working Americans and their families. The wages of workers are 26% better than for non-union workers; and union workers generally have better healthcare benefits, pensions and disability compensation than workers not associated with a union. How then do unions win only half of the elections to organize?

The reason is because the current system fails to provide a responsive mechanism for workers when their rights have been unjustly denied. The Employee Free Choice Act makes necessary changes to the National Labor Relations Act to fill in the gaps of the current law and guarantee workers a voice

without the threat of unwarranted penalties. I will continue to push for this bill in Congress, and I will do everything I can as a member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee to make sure that workers' hard-fought victories are not undercut by lemon laws and partisan politics.

I will keep you informed on this legislation, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my district office toll free at 1-888-442-8040.